

## PHYSICAL CONDITIONS

### PROPERTY OWNERSHIP

Nearly half of the East Mountain Area is in public ownership. The public agencies controlling property in the East Mountain Area are the National Forest Service, U.S. Department of Energy, Kirtland Air Force Base, Isleta Indian Reservation, State of New Mexico, U.S. Bureau of Land Management, and the City of Albuquerque (see Property Ownership Map).

*“A landscape is where we speed up or retard or divert the cosmic program and impose our own. It is here in the U.S. that we see the largest and most impressive example of neoclassic spatial organization. Our national grid system, devised by the Founding Fathers, represents the last attempt to produce a Classical political landscape, one based on the notion that certain spaces – notably the square and the rectangle – were inherently beautiful and therefore suited to the creation of a just society. Instead of being a blueprint for the ideal Classical democratic social order, the grid system became simply an easy and effective way of dividing up the land.”*

*- J.B. Jackson  
“Concluding with Landscapes”, 1984*

The National Forest Service controls the bulk of the mountainous terrain in the East Mountain Area. The Forest Service manages the Sandia, Manzano, and the northern portion of the Manzanita Mountains. These areas provide a wide range of active and passive recreational uses for the entire metropolitan area. The Cibola National Forest adopted a Forest Management Plan in 1985 which identifies goals and priorities for the Forest Service Lands for the next 20 years. The Forest Service is presently working on updating the trails component of their plan.

The southern portion of the Manzanita Mountains is an area withdrawn from Forest Service use in 1946 for Department of Energy and Air Force uses. This area is presently used for a variety of testing, storage, and safety buffer activities. Due to the nature of its use, private use of this area for recreational purposes is prohibited. The East Mountain Area residents have expressed a strong desire that the eastern portion of this property be given back to the Forest Service for recreational uses (see East Mountain Area Plans Part 1: Citizen Participation, October 1991). Bernalillo county recognizes the complexities of the operation of this land and will continue to work with the Department of Energy and Kirtland AFB to ensure the area is managed safely for all residents.

The City of Albuquerque also controls approximately four thousand acres of land formerly controlled by the Forest Service. The land was part of a three-way land trade in order to obtain the Sandia Mountain portion of the Elena Gallegos land grant preserved as permanent open space. The city land in the East Mountain Area are to be sold, leased or exchanged to acquire and maintain open space. The Albuquerque City Council has approved a contract for the phased sale of 2,396 acres of this land subject to County approval of a master plan for the property. In addition to the contract, a memorandum of understanding was adopted by the City of Albuquerque, Bernalillo County, and the developer on October 3, 1991, which outlines the citizen input in the planning process for the property. The other public properties are parcels of approximately 1,300 acres or less scattered throughout the study area.

IN addition to the public lands, the study area includes three separate Spanish and Mexican land grants. The Canyon de Carnue grant is located in Tijeras Canyon. The Chilili grant is located in the southeastern portion of the area. The San Pedro grant is located in the northeast corner of the County.

The San Pedro land grant is under private ownership now and is used for agricultural purposes. The Carnue and Chilili land grants are held in common ownership with strict restrictions on land sales only to direct heirs of the grant. In fact, residences within the grant are developed on property leased to the family by the grant.

The Village of Tijeras is the only incorporated community within the plan boundaries. There are many historic and new communities throughout the East Mountain Area, but none of these are incorporated villages.

**(East Mountain Area Property Ownership Map goes here. – full page)**

## **RURAL CHARACTER**

*“Rural character is a bit like pornography – it’s very difficult to define, but you know it when you see it.”*

*- Fred Heyer, AICP  
“Preserving Rural Character”, 1990*

The purpose of this section is to begin to define the desirable rural characteristics and conservable natural features of the East Mountain Area. The rural characteristics of the East Mountain Area identified in this report distinguish the area from other urban and suburban areas within Bernalillo County. Some of the general characteristics which may be cited include owner-designed and –built housing, small-scale agricultural pursuits such as the raising of crops, livestock, etc., small commercial developments (businesses catering primarily to local needs and tourism), inconspicuous infrastructures, and a sense of community in relation to problem solving and decision making.

Some more specific characteristics of the East Mountain Area follow:

- Visual screening (resulting from topography and vegetation) between dwellings or subdivisions providing a sense of privacy and separation;
- Open areas and scenic vistas uncluttered by structures, and open space or vegetative screening between roads and development;
- Large undeveloped areas and corridors which allow for migration of and habitat areas for wildlife and for watershed protection and enhancement;
- Clean air and clear skies unpolluted by light at night, pollution, and minimal “noise” disturbance resulting from human activities;
- Few paved main roads accessed by unpaved secondary roads, appreciated for reducing travel haste and accepted by residents with reasonable tolerance for road generated dust and limited accessibility due to rain and snow melt;
- Locally-owned and operated commercial enterprises serving local needs or providing distinctive locally-produced products to a wider market;

- Traditional lifestyles and historical landmarks;
- Individual responsibility and self-sufficiency in utility systems and other resource development and utilization, less reliance on centralized service structures. (This characteristic can result in problems, i.e., bad water, not enough water, poor septic effluent disposal, etc.)

It is important to the East Mountain Area residents that rural character be preserved. People who choose to live in rural areas typically do so from an attachment to the different lifestyle available, an appreciation of the natural character of the area, and a belief that this character is important to preserve.

It is also important to the metropolitan area that rural character be preserved. A rural area presents an alternative setting to urban residents, a setting in which stress and tensions from daily pressures may be relieved. The rural setting is a source of visual enjoyment and educational experience to tourists and residents of urban and suburban areas, all available for the cost of a drive through the area. Specific settings can provide personal experiences no longer available to urban residents except through travel; for example, hiking trails, bridle paths, geological areas, piñon nut collecting areas, produce stands, and on-site farm and dairy product sales.

A careful analysis of answers, printed in the East Mountain Area Plan public input document, to the survey question “What are the...most important issues that need to be addressed in the East Mountain Area Plan update?” reveals that a majority of respondents (58%) are concerned about a need for control of development and population growth, particularly in relation to resource depletion and loss of rural character.

***“Beyond all the self-conscious lamentation over the passing of rural America, beyond the shallow romancing over a time that never was, lies a real awareness of some unique values of small-town life—certain relationships among people, between man and the land. These values are not better than those of city and suburb, they are simply different. They are values worthy of respect and preservation – values that some people would like to share today. The villages and small towns of America are not dwindling and disappearing because their values are no longer meaningful, but because they no longer work economically, no longer provide the level of services and amenities that most of us demand. No dramatic violence is being done to rural America. It is withering away because it has little function in modern life. The question of whether it can be brought back to health is at base a question of whether it can once again be brought into the mainstream of American life, of whether it can be given a meaningful function. And if it can, there still remains the question of whether the cost would be worthwhile.”***

***- Robert B. Riley  
“New Mexico Villages in a  
Future Landscape”, 1969***

## **OPEN SPACE**

The East Mountain Area has an enormous amount of land controlled by the National Forest Service; however, there are many significant open areas and wildlife habitat areas under private ownership which also serve as valuable watershed and open areas. The Area’s natural arroyos provide riparian habitat, wetland areas, and wildlife migration corridors. Open meadows and grasslands provide visual relief and a “sense of openness” for the community. Specific examples of lands that are now privately owned and

are recommended for County acquisition and management for public open space and watershed preservation are\*:

- The Three Gun Spring (Tres Pistolas) area north of Carnuel;
- Lands along former Highway 217 and Martinez Road, east from junction with Hwy. 337 (South 14) to County line (cattle and horse grazing and “rural” scenic area with meadow open space comprising the valley of Arroyo de Yrisarri, and some significant wildlife habitat / migratory bird nesting areas);
- Lands west of Gutierrez Canyon Road, including the ridge immediately to the west (natural area, including the natural state wetland paralleling the ridge);
- Tijeras Canyon (between ridgetops) between the eastern limit of Carnuel (where I-40 crosses over Tijeras Arroyo and “Old US-66”) and the western Village limit of Tijeras;
- Tijeras Arroyo from its source to Albuquerque city limits;
- Cedro Canyon flanked by Hwy. 337 between bounding ridges (including the area south of Tijeras accessed by Los Alamos Drive) and south of Chamisoso Canyon Road – all the way to Cedro; and the area between the stream crossing Hwy. 337 southeast of Thunderbird Lane near Eagle Road;
- The valley of Juan Tomas Arroyo;
- Sabino Canyon, especially immediately east of Hwy. 337 (S. 14), where the road to Juan Tomas passes through pristine country;
- Open space and wooded lands fronting Hwy. 337 in the vicinity of its junction with Hwy. 217 and alongside Hwy. 337 south to the Chilili Grant boundary.
- North and west sides of escarpment in Rincon Loop.

\* *The Three-Gun Spring (Tres Pistolas) area is the first priority for acquisition. The additional lands recommended for acquisition should be prioritized as part of a natural resources plan for the East Mountain Area (see page 83).*

## **VISUAL CHARACTER**

A significant component of the East Mountain Area’s scenic quality is the visual character of existing scenic roadways. The Crest Highway (Highway 536) has been designated a National Scenic Byway. This is the only officially designated scenic roadway in the East Mountain Area. Other roadways important to the visual character of the East Mountain Area that should be examined for potential scenic designation (by the County) include:

- Old Highway 66 from Carnuel to Tijeras (through the “Canyon”);
- North 14 between villages and north of San Antonito;

- Hwy. 337 (S. 14) between Tijeras and the County line south of Chilili;
- Frost Road from Sandia Knolls to the east County line;
- Hwy. 217 (including Mt. Valley Road and that portion formerly called Hwy. 222);
- Zamora Road;
- \*County Line Road (as unpaved);
- \*Sedillo Road (as unpaved);
- \*the route comprising Gutierrez Canyon Road and Rider Road;
- \*Martinez Road to the east county line and beyond, with the cooperation of Torrance County (as unpaved);
- \*the road network from Oak Flat Picnic Ground to Hwy. 217 (formerly Hwy. 222) which includes Forest Road 413 and Anaya Road (as unpaved);
- \*the road connecting Hwy. 337 (S. 14) to Hwy. 217 through Juan Tomas, including Sabino Canyon Road and Juan Tomas Road (as unpaved).

\* *These roadways should be protected in their unpaved state as long as possible to provide rural character and enhance visitors' experience of the area.*

## **AGRICULTURAL USES**

Agricultural uses in the East Mountain Area, while not as prevalent as they were in the past, continue to have an important impact upon the existing character of the Area. Specific areas dominated by agricultural uses are the Chilili Land Grant, the Isleta Indian Reservation, and the San Pedro Land Grant. In addition to these areas the entire area south of I-40 derives much of its scenic and rural character from scattered agricultural uses, particularly along Hwys. 217 and 222 (Martinez Road). Existing agricultural uses in the East Mountain Area include:

- pinto bean farms and mixed agricultural uses
- cattle, horse and burro pasture
- dairy farming (cattle and goat)
- other livestock farming
- other dryland farming

## **DISTINCT CHARACTER AREAS**

*“Each hamlet or village or town should be a place, its own place. This is not a matter of fake historicism or artsy-craftsy architecture. It is a matter of respect for things existing, subtle patterns of place woven from vistas and street widths and the siting and color and scale of stores, houses, and*

*trees.... If the countryside is to prosper, it must be different from city or suburb. That difference is in part the simple business of containing our towns and giving them boundaries."*

**- Robert B. Riley**  
***"New Mexico Villages in a  
Future Landscape", 1969***

The area is made up of five distinct character regions (see Character Area Map) as follows:

A. Carnuel and the "Canyon"

The part of Bernalillo County east of Albuquerque city limits and west of Tijeras village limits. This is the gateway through which all traffic must pass (via Historic Route 66 or I-40) between Albuquerque and the East Mountain Area. The area contains the Cañon de Carnue Spanish land grant, which is a self-managing, cooperative-style community. This area has high scenic value to the entire area from the undeveloped "Canyon" corridor and the Tres Pistolas area between the existing development and the Forrest Service Lands to the north.

B. Tijeras/North 14

The part of Bernalillo County east of the Cibola National Forest boundary and east of the west limits of Tijeras Village and bounded on the south by the National Forest boundary and southern Tijeras Village limits and on the east by the San Pedro grant (east of N. Hwy. 14), the eastern edge of Sandia Knolls, and Rider and Gutierrez Canyon Roads. This is the most densely populated part of the Area; it is the designated economic center. It contains a large open-space area between Gutierrez Canyon Rd. and Sierra Vista, which provides an excellent natural buffer between developed areas.

C. Northeast Area

The part of Bernalillo County east of the intense development (above) which extends south to the City of Albuquerque land lying north of Juan Tomas Road and west of the National Forest boundary (including consideration of the Edgewood, Tarrant and Santa Fe Counties to the East). This area is typified by mixed open space and scattered residential development, with commercial enterprises concentrated along I-40. There are some small-scale agricultural enterprises and home-based businesses, particularly along Frost Road. The area includes the San Pedro Grant which is located in the far northeast corner of the County, and is presently open grazing land.

D. Chilili/Isleta

The part of Bernalillo county south of "Second standard parallel north" (line just north of Isleta Reservation boundary) and including all of the Chilili Grant. This area is dominated by open space, agriculture, scattered residential development, and small commercial activities in the Village of Chilili. The cultural aspects of this area are unique to the East Mountain Area with lifestyles dominated and development determined by the long-standing cultural tradition of an agriculture-based economy and traditional Hispanic and Indian village lifestyles.

E. South Central

The rest of the Area (the part of Bernalillo County lying south of sectors “b” and “c” above and north of “d” and including that portion of National Forest lying east of S. 14 (Hwy 337) and consideration of the proximity of sector “b” and Edgewood as “major” commercial centers. This area is made up of large lots, green-belts, open space, pastoral and scenic views; traditional dryland farming and small-scale livestock production, existing commercial is primarily limited to agricultural and home-based, except in the Ponderosa (Kuhn Road) area.

**(Insert map titled “Character Areas”)**

The rural character of the East Mountain Area is very important to its residents. This character represents a lifestyle different from that in an urban setting. The citizens in the East Mountain Area acknowledge and are concerned that the existence of the Area’s rural character is vulnerable to change. It is very important to the residents of the East Mountain Area that the special characteristics identified in this section are preserved to the greatest extent possible. These characteristics give the East Mountain Area its own unique identity and “sense of place”.

## **TRANSPORTATION NETWORK**

The primary transportation corridors in the East Mountain Area are Historic Route 66/I-40, NM 14, and NM 337 (South 14). Nearly all development within the area relies on these routes for daily transportation needs. Interstate 40 is a six-lane divided freeway that bisects the area into a north and south area. Connections to and across the interstate are limited, thus reinforcing the break between the north and south areas.

Historic Route 66 runs parallel to I-40 across the area. This road is heavily used by local traffic to access retail and community services provided on the eastern fringe of the City of Albuquerque. Historic Route 66 is also the primary artery through the Village of Tijeras and Carnuel. Historic Route 66 is important to the area from a historical perspective as part of the original east-west roadway across New Mexico.

*“The newer path of Route 66 past Santa Rosa eventually became Interstate 40. People driving to Albuquerque and points west still have a view of the sweeping New Mexican landscape, a scene replete with juniper and piñon.... Only 56 miles to the west of Clines Corners lies Albuquerque, the largest city in the state. But first one must go through the towns of Moriarty, Edgewood, Barton, and Tijeras. The interstate has passed all of them by, but the fragments of Route 66 offer travelers opportunities to stop in every...one.*

*“Bob Audette is a man who remembers the Mother Road, and regrets that some stretches of the highway were neglected. He says, ‘This is history we’re talking about. Route 66 is a ribbon of history across the country and there are lots of memories. I remember Okies going out to California in their old cars and trucks with everything they owned tied down – rocking chairs, chicken coops, and bedsprings. If you were driving through Tijeras Canyon in the old days, you had to honk your horn before going into a turn because there wasn’t enough room for two cars. You had to be careful to not sideswipe someone.’”*

*- Michael Wallis  
“Route 66: The Mother Road”, 1990*

NM 14 and NM 337 (South 14) provide the only north-south access across the entire East Mountain Area. North of I-40, NM 14 is known as the “Turquoise Trail” which provides access north to the towns

of Golden, Madrid, Cerrillos, and Santa Fe. This is an important historic and scenic roadway, which gets a significant amount of tourist and sightseer traffic. The “Turquoise Trail” also provides access to the Sandia national Scenic Byway, which accesses numerous recreation areas including the Sandia Crest and Sandia Peak Ski Area. The Sandia National Scenic Byway traverses seven biological zones from high desert to sub-alpine at Sandia Crest with an elevation change of almost 4,000 feet.

Frost Road provides a connection between NM 14 and NM 217 east-west across the northern portion of the study area. This road provides access to the Sandia Knolls subdivision which contains almost ten percent of the East Mountain Area’s population.

Gutierrez Canyon Road offers an alternative north-south roadway north of I-40; however, this is a narrow, windy, gravel road. Residents along Gutierrez Canyon Road are very concerned about the possibility of paving and/or widening the road. The only other north-south connection north of I-40 is a route on NM 306, Meadow Drive, and Sedillo Hill Road (Historic Route 66) which are all paved two-lane roads.

NM 337 (South 14) provides access south to the historic Spanish villages of Cedro, Yrisarri, Escobosa, and Chilili. NM 337 continues on south to Mountainair. Near the old site of Yrisarri, NM 337 is intersected by NM 217 (a paved east-west connection formerly called NM 222). The former NM 222 continues east into Tarrant County as Martinez Road from the southern end of the original NM 217 several miles east of NM 337. NM 217 provides an alternate north-south route serving a limited area in the eastern portion of the study area. NM 217 is a two-lane paved road that connects NM 337 to Frost Road.

The East Mountain Area has become a very popular place for recreational and competitive bicycling. Roads that are currently receiving heavy bicycle traffic include NM 333 (old Route 66), NM 14, NM 337 (South 14), and NM 217. Bicycle traffic must be taken into consideration as an integral part of transportation planning in the East Mountain Area.

## **TRAILS**

### **(Insert Map for Trails)**

The existing trail network of the East Mountain Area includes official trails within National Forest Service boundaries, and existing user trails that circulate through private property.

The existing trails on private lands are not part of any official trail network. National Forest Service trails located in the Sandia, Manzano, and Manzanita mountains circulate through the Sandia Wilderness Area and Forest Service lands. Trail access in wilderness areas is limited to non-vehicular use, but outside wilderness areas, trails accommodate multiple uses. Discharge of firearms is prohibited on Forest Service Lands within Bernalillo County. The Withdrawal Area in the southwest portion of the area is restricted from all public use.

Also, a number of unofficial trails exist which have been used over the years for walking and riding from village to village. Many of these traverse areas of particular scenic beauty. The citizens trail committee has mapped much of the unofficial trail network south of I-40; however, none of the unofficial trails north of I-40 have been mapped.

There are several areas where access to trails or open space needs to be preserved/established:



1. **Picnic sites:** There is a need for additional picnic sites throughout the Area.
2. Bernalillo County should work with the City of Albuquerque to acquire land or easements and allow public use on **Open Space trade lands** in sections 15 and 16, south of I-40 and the village of Sedillo. These lands should be made accessible to the public for recreational use.
3. **Public access to La Madera Road** should be protected.
4. **Multi-use trails** should be developed south of I-40. One suggested site is the graded gravel pit area just north of Cedro on the west side of Highway 337.
5. **Legal access** should be secured **for trails** where private lands meet forest service boundaries.

The value of preserving existing trails and extending the network of trails and open spaces is acknowledged in the goals developed by the residents of the East Mountain Area. It will increase recreational opportunities, conserve woodlands, create natural breaks and open spaces, and provide for routes between areas of development. Copies of the trail maps prepared as part of this study are available for review at the City of Albuquerque Planning Office.

It is recommended that Bernalillo County continue to work cooperatively with private landowners and the US Forest Service in identifying and establishing trail networks in the East Mountain Area.

## **COMMUNITY FACILITIES**

There are three fire stations and four fire substations dispersed throughout the East Mountain Area. A cluster of community facilities are located in the vicinity of Tijeras including the Village Hall, a County Sheriff's office, a waste transfer station, one each of the fire station and substations, a post office, a middle school, an elementary school, and a community center. A new library is planned for construction in Tijeras as well. This clustering of community services in a centralized location should be encouraged through the policies of this plan.

There is an additional elementary school near Frost Road and North Highway 14. East Mountain Area high school students are mostly bused to Manzano High School in Albuquerque, although some choose to attend Moriarty High School. (See Community Facilities Map on the next page).

**(Insert Map of Community Facilities)**